MAY–JUNE 1977
Volume 68, Number 3
Fifty Cents

California GARDEN

FLORAL MEETINGS

ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday June 15, 1977: 6:30 p.m.—Covered-Dish Dinner, Installation of Officers—Entertainment; Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park.

May 14, 1977: Mira Mesa Mall—10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; San Diego Floral Association is sponsoring garden and floral exhibits at the Mira Mesa Mall, corner of Mira Mesa Blvd., and Camino Ruiz.

June 5, 1977: A Visit to Quail Gardens; Floral members and guests will be given a conducted tour at 2:00 p.m.; refreshments will be served after the tour.

May 24, 1977:
and
June 14, 1977: Mrs. John Kirkpatrick's Flower Arrangement Classes; Room 101, Balboa Park; 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

June 21, 1977:
thru
July 4, 1977: California Garden Exhibit and Sales Table in the Garden Section of the Southern California Exposition; 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. daily.

TOURS

May 14, 1977: Wildflower Show in Julian $7.50

This will be a delightful day in the back country as well as seeing the abundant exhibit of wildflowers. Depart Balboa Park back of the Organ Pavalion at 8:00 a.m. and Hall & Girard Street in La Jolla at 8:30 a.m. For reservations call the Floral Office Monday-Friday, 10-3 p.m., 232-5762.

SHOWS

May 7, 1977: San Diego Epiphyllum Show "Down Mexico Way" in the Majorca Room, Casa del Prado, 11:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.;FREE.

May 7 & 8, 1977: Mission Valley Shopping Center Show sponsored by Men's Garden Club of San Diego; open Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Sunday 12:00 to 5:00 p.m.

May 7 & 8, 1977: Escondido Garden Club Show at Masonic Hall, Escondido.

May 14 & 15, 1977: San Diego Geranium Society presents its Fifth Spring Show "GeraniaMania" in the Majorca Room, Casa del Prado; Saturday 12:00 to 5:30; Sunday 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; FREE.

May 21, 1977: Carlsbad Garden Club Show at Plaza Camino Real, Carlsbad.

May 21, 1977: Lake San Marcos Garden Club Show at the Recreation Center in San Marcos.

May 27 & 28, 1977: Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club Show.

May 28 & 29, 1977: San Diego Botanical Garden Foundation Second Annual Plant Sale, Patio A Casa del Prado; open 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days.

May 30, 1977: Dos Valles Garden Club Show.

June 4 & 5, 1977: San Diego Cactus & Succulent Annual Show, Majorca Room, Casa del Prado, Saturday 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

June 18 & 19, 1977: San Diego Fuchsia & Shade Plant Show, Majorca Room, Casa del Prado, Saturday 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; FREE.

July 9, 1977: First Show of the Southwest Hemerocallis Society; Majorca Room, Casa del Prado; Open 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; FREE.

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Our cover is a Lady Fern drawn by Larry Eifert.

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THE SILVER TREE

by JANE MINSHALL

ONE SUMMER day when I was a young teenager and already an ardent gardener, I was taken by my aunt to visit a fine old garden in Santa Barbara. The garden held many treasurers—including trees and shrubs rarely seen today—and to my eyes the greatest treasure of all was ***Leucadendron argenteum***, the silver tree. I remember coming unexpectedly upon a grouping of several of the trees, with leaves of pure silver shimmering in the breeze. The impact of my first meeting with this lovely tree is engraved in my memory.

Many years later—30, to be exact— I fulfilled a long held dream and visited South Africa. The main purpose of the trip was to see growing in the wild some of our many familiar garden plants which call South Africa home. At the very top of my list of plants I hoped to see was the silver tree. These trees are uncommon even in their native land; in fact, they are found in the wild only in the mountains of the south-western Cape, especially on Table Mountain. It's sad to read that in the 17th and 18th Centuries, forests of silver trees were cut for firewood! There is a magnificent grove on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain, seven miles from the center of Cape Town and within the confines of the National Botanic Gardens, Kirstenbosch. The experience of walking through this pure stand of silver trees is one I'll never forget. To reach the grove, I had climbed up a steep path through masses of proteas and pincushions in full bloom with much ohing and ahing along the way—I was filled with anticipation for what lay ahead. Suddenly, I was in a forest of pure silver, the branches of the trees rippling and glinting in the bright sunshine. It was truly a sight beyond words to describe; spectacular and thrilling for me.

The silver tree, ***Leucadendron argenteum***, is a member of that diverse tribe of plants belonging to the family of Proteaceae. African cousins of the silver tree include the proteas and leucospermums (pincushions), while some of the Australian relatives are the banksias and grevilleas.

A height of 40 feet is occasionally reached by the silver tree, but its ultimate height is more usually 20 to 25 feet. Narrow and stiffly upright when young, with maturity it developes a spreading, irregular silhouette. The 3 to 6 inch long gray-green leaves have a fine coating of silky hairs which reflect the light and give the foliage the appearance of pure silver. While the branches of young trees are thickly covered with the overlapping leaves, on older trees portions of the lower branches become leafless. The trunk develops a gray bark which bears conspicuous horizontal leaf scars. Male and female flowers appear on separate trees. The male flowers have the form of a fluffy apricot pompon, while the female flower head is in the shape of a silvery cone.

The silver tree is quite demanding in its requirements. It will not thrive in clay or alkaline soil. A rapidly draining soil is essential, undoubtedly the number one requirement. Silver trees want regular watering, about once a week, but never too much at any one time. Perfect drainage and care in watering are necessary to avoid attack from a root fungus, which is probably the chief cause of silver trees passing out before their time. While moisture laden coastal breezes are to the tree's liking, hot dry winds are not; in fact, a hot wind can kill a silver tree. Even though this tree is tender to frost, it will withstand cold (26 degrees F.) better than extreme heat. Since much of what I have read about fertilizing silver trees has been contradictory, I sought the advice of Howard Asper, of Green Valley Nurseries. His recommendation is to feed every four to six weeks, spring through fall, with a low nitrogen fertilizer with a 6—6—4 analysis, and a high amount of chelated iron, which would be good for all acid loving plants.

I live in the foothills north of Lakeside (San Diego area) where hot dry air is prevalent throughout summer and fall—a climate far from ideal for silver trees or proteas. Nevertheless, thanks to a fast draining acid soil, I was able to

grow a beautifully formed, healthy silver tree in my patio. The tree reached a height of 14 feet in a five year period and even produced its fluffy pompon flowers. Then one day, following a hot Santa Ana wind, I noticed that all of the branch tips were drooping—and that was that. In a day or two it was gone. I've never known whether it was fungus or the hot wind that killed it. When I told a friend about my loss, I tried to console myself by saying that at least it wasn't any of the trees on my property considered vital for screening out neightbors or providing shade. She hit the nail on the head by answering "But, it was your pride and joy."

Plant a silver tree for the joy it will bring you for however brief a time. Don't plant it for posterity, for its life span is so uncertain (though it may live for 25 years). Fortunately, the tree is a rapid grower, and fortunately a young tree is particularly decorative. Small plants make handsome container subjects for a few years. Because the silver tree is such a strong accent in the landscape, designwise it can be hard to use. Trees may be planted in clumps of 3 or 5, in the way that birches are commonly seen. A clump or a single tree is most effective against a simple green background such as that provided by pines, with perhaps a few gray foliaged shrubs nearby. The tree is breathtakingly beautiful at night when illuminated from below.

While I wouldn't trade my memory of that shimmering silver foliage on Table Mountain for anything, one doesn't have to travel farther than our own north San Diego County to see fine specimens of ***Leucadendron argenteum***. Groves of silver trees may be seen at Howard Asper's Green Valley Nurseries and at Paul Hutchison's Tropic World Nursery, both just north of Escondido. And there are some handsome silver trees at Quail Gardens in Encinitas.

This is a tree to excite the venturesome gardener. If you think you can make it happy, do try one. After all, the silver tree was successfully grown in England in 1693! □

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VEGETABLES
—That Take Less Space

by GEORGE JAMES

PLANT BREEDERS are constantly working to improve the plants we grow in our gardens, as well as those used commercially. Breeders that work with vegetable plants have developed varieties that are superior to those grown in the past. The newer varieties may yield more, be more resistant to pests, have an edible part that is larger or of better quality, or is better suited to the climate in the area in which it is to be grown. Some of the recently introduced varieties are smaller when mature so are better suited for growth in containers, which is a boon for apartment dwellers and others that do not have garden room, and usually the fruit is normal size even if the plant is smaller. There are also cabbage varieties that make smaller heads. These take up less room and the heads fit the needs of small families better than larger ones do.

There are many varieties of flowers and vegetables developed each year. To help gardeners in their selection of varieties, so they get the best of them, a system of trials has been established by the seed industry. New varieties that are thought by the developers to be superior, are grown and evaluated at many points in the continental United States. These experimental plants experience a wide range of soil and climatic conditions in the tests and their performance is evaluated by disinterested observers at each test point. Plants that rate high in the overall tests are awarded the privilege of using the "All-America Selection" designation with their name to indicate that this is a superior variety. There are other new and improved varieties that do not have this designation as part of their name and usually if such varieties are offered by a reputable firm they will be found to be satisfactory.

Polls have shown the tomato to be the most popular vegetable, nearly every gardener having grown them. Many kinds of tomato vines grow so large that they are difficult to handle in a container: now there are varieties that make a small bush which are ideal for container culture. All of these have red fruit and vines that are smaller: 'Pixie' has fruit that is about 1¾ inches in diameter; 'Tiny Tim' has ¾ inch fruit; 'Small Fry' bears 1 inch tomatoes; 'Patio' has the largest at 2 inches while 'Sweet 100' variety bears small fruit in clusters.

Carrots are one of the staples of the vegetable garden, growing well under many conditions. The most common kinds need nearly a foot of good soil to grow to maturity and this is not usually found in containers. 'Baby Fingers' is a new variety that is ideal for container culture because the carrots are about 3 inches long when full grown, and are as sweet and succulent as any other variety.

When cucumbers are grown in a container the management of the vine is difficult because of its size and weight, but this is not so when one of the new varieties that grow a smaller vine are used. The variety 'Pepi' grows a vine about 2 feet long and bears medium sized cucumbers that can be used for pickling when small and in salads when fully grown. 'Patio Pik' is about the same size plant and its medium sized fruit can also be used for pickling and in salads, while 'Pot Luck' makes a smaller vine and bears 6 to 7 inch cucumbers that are ideal for salads.

Many kinds of watermelons make too much vine and bear fruit that is so large that they are not suitable for container growth, and large fruits do not ripen well in the coastal area. There are now varieties with vines and fruit that are smaller so they are better adapted for this purpose, and it is said that the smaller fruit will ripen better in the coastal area. There are two varieties that bear yellow fleshed melons, 'Yellow Doll' that bears melons that weigh from 5 to 8 pounds, and the "1976 All-America Selection" 'Yellow Hybrid' has fruit of the same size that have less seeds. Some red fleshed varities are 'New Hampshire Midget' whose melons weigh from 4 to 6 pounds, 'You Sweet Thing' that has melons of 10 to 13 pounds, and 'Family Fun,' a variety that bears melons of 12 to 15 pounds. These varieties have

vines that spread less than those we remember.

'Spirit' is a pumpkin variety that was awarded the "1976 All-America Selection" designation. The pumpkins this produces are about a foot in diameter and are produced close to the crown of the plant. The following squash varieties make vines that are somewhat smaller than we are used to, and the fruit is of a suitable size for home use: 'Table King,' the "1975 All-America Selection" of acorn squash; 'Ambassador,' a green zucchini squash variety, and 'Goldneck,' a yellow summer crookneck squash.

If you grow your vegetables in containers, the compact varieties will be the best for you as they require less work to manage, but if you have garden space with suitable soil and exposure, the conventional varieties that make the larger plants will yield more. □

Saving Vegetable Garden Seeds

Home gardeners who plan to collect their own vegetable seed for next year's garden are not going to do themselves any favors.

It's true, vegetable seeds are expensive but they're also the cheapest item in gardening. If the seed you collect and plant is defective, all the time spent in preparing the soil, the cost of fertilizer and garden tools is wasted.

Quality seed means more than a high percentage of germination. It must be free from insects and diseases and must produce vigorous plants and have characteristics true to the variety you want. This is a big order for the amateur gardener.

This is what you risk when you collect your own seed:

Insects and diseases: Large vegetable seeds such as beans and corn are easily infected with weevils and maggots which kill the embryo. Seed collected from fruiting vegetables often have disease organisms inside the seed as well as on the surface.

Plant not true to variety: For open pollinated crops each variety must be isolated to avoid cross pollination. A Crimson Giant radish cross pollinated with wild radishes will produce a long, narrow purple root which is inedible. The bees can't distinguish between the two.

Low germination: Unless vegetable seeds are harvested at the proper stage of maturity, they will have very low germination. Once harvested the seeds must be stored in ideal temperature and moisture conditions. The home gardener is not equipped to do the job properly.

Hybrid nightmare: In recent years the most popular vegetables have been hybrids. A single hybrid is usually produced by numerous crosses, many of which have very undesirable characteristics. When seeds of first generation hybrids are saved and planted the next year, a shabby collection of plants will produce quality that is poor and yields that are very low.

About the only justification you can have for collecting your own seed is when you are growing a variety that cannot be purchased. It may be an old-fashioned tomato that has unusually good quality or a special bean that came from another country.

We all like to save money, but collecting your own vegetable seeds will not accomplish this goal.

— Dr. William Drinkwater
Rutgers University

The author is Emeritus Professor of University of Hawaii.

EXOTIC FOLIAGES

by DR. DONALD P. WATSON

"EXOTICA" by Alfred Byrd Graf is a definitive reference for the identification of foliage plants. Mr. Graf has a winter home in Vista. So he must smile with great satisfaction when he sees the pages of his book come alive in the many fine exhibits of the horticultural section at the Southern California Exposition in Del Mar.

Each specimen has a label in full view for the many plant enthusiasts who are going back and forth to find the correct name of the plant they want to try next. Many of the unusual tropicals are not sufficiently well known, in the more highly populated temperate and sub-tropical regions, to have popularly accepted common names. Consequently, even the rank amateur may proudly fling around the generic name as he finds his favorite foliage.

Two popular choices are *Dieffenbachias* and *Aglaonemas*, members of the arum family, many of which contain acrid juice that irritates the mouth and throat when eaten. *Dieffenbachias*, of which there are at least 50, and *Aglaonemas* of which there are at least 25 kinds, are extremely similar. Usually the *Aglaonemas* are smaller plants. To be absolutely sure which is which, it will help to see the cluster of red, orange or yellow fruit. The outside sheath or bract on the fruit will have dropped off the *Aglaonemas* when the fruit is ripe. It will not fade and fall from the *Dieffenbachias*.

The leaf of *Dieffenbachia seguine* is an unusual gray green and dark green combination; *Aglaonema* 'Malay Beauty' has a distinctive light colored leaf pattern; *D. oerstedii* is one of my favorites because of its dark green color with almost pure white mid-rib; *A. costatum* has well defined white spots; and *A. oblongifolium curtisii* has a featherlike gray green design.

Calatheas and *Marantas* are also prized for their foliage. They are both members of the arrowroot family, the members of which contain edible starch in their roots. *Calatheas* have short or no stems and seldom branch. *Marantas*, on the other hand, have longer more or less branched

Top to Bottom
Calathea wiotiana
Calthea picurata
Calathea makoyana
Calthea zebrina
Maranta leuconeura

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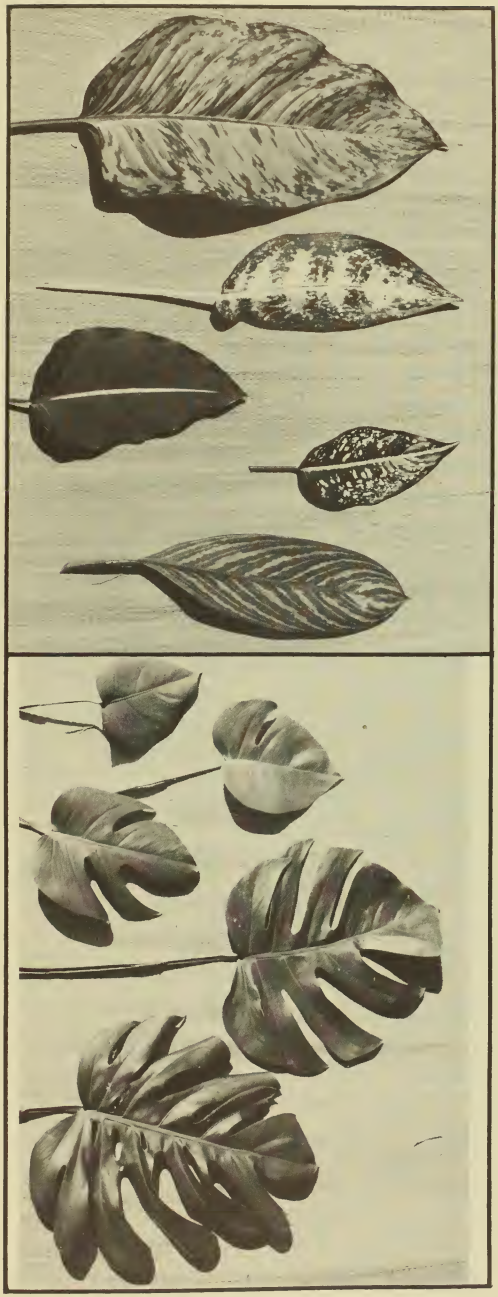


stems.

Calathea wiotiana has gray-green leaves marked regularly with oblique dark green spots that are reddish on the underside; *C. picturata* is small in size, a dark green color with olive green markings; *C. makoyana* is much like the previous species but the leaves have more conspicious lateral veins and oblique green spots that are red on the under side; *C. zebrina* sometimes called the Brazilian zebra plant, has velvety green leaves barred obliquely with yellow-green, althernating with dark olive-green above, and red purple on the underside; *Maranta leuconeura*, a smaller plant with light green leaves, spotted near the edges, whitish along the central and side veins, purplish and powdery on the under side.

Philodendrons and *Monsteras* are often confused and naturally so because of their leaf similarities. While there are minute differences in the flowers of *Philodendrons*, few of them flower when grown under artificial conditions.

When you examine tropicals, don't let the leaf shapes fool you. *Monsteras*, *Philodendrons* and other plants exhibit changes in leaf form. Perhaps none is quite as obvious or spectacular as the *Monstera deliciosa*.

The small heart-shaped leaf is in a juvenile state. Where lobes are beginning to form, the leaf is adolescent. The leaf with four complete eyelets is considered to be mature. This exhibition of juvenility in plants is not entirely understood. As a result of some changes in environment, a plant that has been producing mature leaves, will often regress to a juvenile condition.

As you examine tropical foliage plants for accurate identification, don't think that this is a simple matter. Select those your prefer, check the label for its correct name, so you can be sure you are purchasing the plant you really desire. As you select these, think of the beauty of forms of foliage and how decoratively you may use them in home or garden. □

TOP PHOTO: (top to bottom)
Dieffenbachia seguine
Aglaonema **'Malay Beauty'**
Dieffenbachia oerstedii
Aglaonema costatum
Aglaonema oblongfolium curtisii

Monstera leaves:
juvenile (top)
adolescent (center)
mature (bottom)

A PRIVATE MELON PATCH

by ROSALIE GARCIA

FOR AGES, melons have been a "fruit of the vine" that have had a festive and special place in the lives of peoples of the temperate and tropical zones. From Africa they were transported to Asia, on to the Mediterranean and finally to the Americas. Melons are of the same family as the pumpkins and squashes and were grown by the Indians among their corn and gourds. Although they are low in calories, being over 90 per cent water, the flavor and juiciness are always refreshing and satisfying as well as being the source of minerals and vitamins—especially vitamins A and C. The orange, red, gold, or green flesh is decorative and festive enough to grace the most expensive and elegant menu. When the Marion Hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas was at the height of its glory, I remember being taken to breakfast there and being served a thin slice of 'Honeydew' melon for $1.50, which impressed and outraged me. In areas with long hot summers and sandy soil even the poorest can have a melon patch, and often do. There is no season without melons in our markets. In winter they come from Central America and Mexico. From May to November the states of Florida, Georgia, and California, in that order lead all the Southern states in commercial production of tons of both watermelons and cantaloupes. California, particularly, produces in the fall months what are known as winter melons: the green, webbed 'Persian,' the orange casaba, and the smooth mottled 'Crenshaw.'

The watermelon, *Citrullus vulgaris*, is the most satisfactory melon for the modern market. It has to be ripe before it is harvested. The stem becomes somewhat wizened, and when the melon is thumped, it should give back a hollow sound. Pickers become adept and seldom put an unripe fruit on the market. The keeping quality is good, so that a week or 10 days does not impair the freshness. Melons cut in the round, instead of sliced lengthwise, will keep their flavor much longer when properly covered and refrigerated. Letting a melon stand, exposed to the air after it is cut, reduces the sugar content. To help prevent this loss of sweetness, cover the cut surface with a damp cloth or plastic wrap.

For these reasons, in the hot and humid climates where it thrives the best, the watermelon has had great commercial and social impact. I grew up in such an area in Arkansas. I have many many memories of walking between great green walls of watermelons stacked for shipping—no melon less than 40 pounds and 2 feet long. They were the green and white striped 'Tom Watsons' and the deep green ones, the variety of which I no longer remember. Occasionally one sees a truck on a vacant lot loaded with these "imported" melons selling for nearly $5.00 each. They seem to find buyers, probably for nostalgic reasons.

Watermelon festivals are not uncommon in some of the shipping areas of the South. The "culls," those not quite perfect melons, are cut and served to all comers amid loud music and great sociability.

In my day, the young people often organized hay rides on moonlight nights, and were not above descending on a roadside watermelon field and helping themselves for refreshment. It was also not uncommon for an irate owner to fire a few shots which sent the young scamps flying in terror to the wagon.

The watermelon supper on the church lawn on a hot summer evening usually brought out most of the community. A nice juicy slice of melon about two feet long would go for a dime, and a whole melon for 50 cents. A real spender would buy a melon for his family or party and get set for a good sociable time. It was also a great opportunity for dates. I was most flabbergasted at the age of 11 or 12 to be invited in a very formal speech for the pleasure of my company to be escorted home by the brother of one of my best friends. Although I had known him all of my life, I am sure I did not say two words all the way home—with my mother and two sisters following discreetly behind.

Although 40 pounds seems to be the limit on the commercial size of watermelons, growers still vie with each other in producing the biggest ones. Forcing growth by injecting sugar water into the melon as it grows has produced melons weighing close to 200 pounds. These great ones get written up in the papers, and probably the grower gets favorable publicity.

Every summer we would visit my mother's people who had farms and orchards along the Blue Bayou, where one cousin specialized in melons. He would round up all the young cousins and take us to a clear blue pool in the bayou for swimming. Back at the house he cut a dozen watermelons, placing them along the edge of the side porch, a half melon for each child. After we had gorged ourselves on just the heart of the melon, we shot each other with the seeds. When we were thoroughly sticky and tired, he took us back to the pool where we cleansed ourselves and took a nap under a willow tree.

At home we looked forward to the bi-weekly visit of the "watermelon man" who came with a wagon load of 40-pound melons and several big, foot-long and crimped muskmelons, fragrant and delicious—the type I never see anymore. He put them in our cool cellar where I spent the heat of the day reading, leaning up against the smooth, cool melons. One summer I got through 14 volumes of Ridpath's History of the World!

But, like many other things, watermelons in California are not what they used to be. They are smaller, seldom over 25 pounds, thinner of rind, fewer of seed, even seedless, smaller of vine, and susceptible to more different diseases. They still need hot summer days, sandy loam, and from 75 to 90 days to develop. Planting is usually from May to July. Burpee lists the newest hybrids that will fit into our California gardens. I have grown watermelons in my lower garden, which is protected from the clean breezes by a brick wall, but they do better in our inland valleys of El Cajon, Bonita and Escondido. These have the heat and sandy soil, but lack the humidity that melons really love. Burpee is recommending its 'Sugar Bush,' which makes only a 6-foot vine. Eventually hybridizers will produce a bush-type watermelon which will go over big. Vines take up too much space for urban life. I had good luck with Burpee's 'Sugar Baby' watermelon, which is a midget sometimes no larger than a grapefruit. Cut in halves, it serves two nicely. I trained mine on a trellis. Barbara Jones had hers in raised beds where the vines trailed over the sides, and the fruits hung without touching the ground. Since mildew is a scourge of all the curcubits, any device to keep the vines off the damp ground is helpful.

At a farmer's market in Bonita, I find local melons, both watermelons and cantaloupes, raised in Bonita Valley, vine-ripened and delicious. If one has space for only a few melon vines, greatest rewards will come from muskmelons and winter melons. The supermarkets sell only those harvested in the "turning" stage which are gassed, then refrigerated so that the flavor is either gone or so undeveloped and diminished that one eats with his eyes, not his tastebuds. What we call by the general name of cantaloupe, that roundish, webbed rind fruit is really a muskmelon, ***Cucumis melo***. Our 'Honeydew' melon, with its hard rind and green flesh is more like the real cantaloupe, ***Cucumis cantalupensis*** (Bailey, Manual of Cultivated Plants), but we have cantaloupes and 'Honeydews' and we know which is which. Cantaloupes are harder to grow than watermelons. They must have warmth, and protection from cold winds. Mr. Robert Riley of Rancho Santa Fe grows beautiful cantaloupes and winter melons, but he has a very protected plot below the highway on one side and his house on the other. I have never produced any successfully on my breezy hill. If I lived in any of San Diego County's inland valleys, I would try any of the dozen varieties mentioned by Burpee: 'Ambrosia,' 'Gem,' 'Pride,' 'Delicious,' 'Heart of Gold'—the names inflame my imagination. I frankly do not know which is best. One always has to experiment, for each garden has its own micro-climate. When a fragrant, ripe cantaloupe—ripe to the rind and fragrant enough to perfume the house—is achieved, that is reward enough. How does one tell when to pluck a jewel of delight? Watch for the stem to begin looking shriveled. A gentle tug will loosen it from the vine and the underside of the melon is yellowish, with a smoothing of the netting. Don't refrigerate it. Cut it open, scoop out the seeds, slice it, and eat it to the rind. Goodbye supermarket!

The winter melons, those large ones that

come into the markets from September to November are usually better than the cantaloupes. Because of their good keeping quality, they can be left on the vine long enough to ripen before they are harvested. The orange-gold casaba, ***Cucumis inodorus***, somewhat lobed with whitish flesh, and hybrids known as 'Crenshaws' and Persians,' are all large and delicious. Since these melons take about 4 months to develop, they should be planted at least by May, and protected from chill until the weather is really hot. One needs space for these vines, which produce only a few melons. They do well on protected hillsides, if the mound for planting is reinforced so it can be watered. A friend of mine in La Mesa filled old bushel fruit baskets with sand and compost and imbedded them in the hillside. In these he planted his melons, and the vines spilled down the hill and produced well.

A melon patch can be most rewarding with little care after preparation and planting. Melons need water, best administered by drip or irrigation. Mildew, wilt, and bugs are ready to move in, but can be discouraged by the same methods one uses with other plants. The effort is worth it! □

WATER-SAVING IRRIGATION

From University of California Agricultural Extension Bulletin AXT-111.

THE TEXTURE and the structure of a soil determine the amount of available water the soil will hold at any one irrigation. This water-holding capacity cannot be changed appreciably by normal additions of organic matter or other materials, although it is possible to increase it by adding massive amounts of organic matter. So-called soil mixes, which contain 25 to 50 per cent organic matter, and peat soils have very high water-holding capacities.

The available water-holding capacity of a soil depends primarily on the soil texture. The table below gives the approximate water-holding capacity of various soil types. The values are given in inches of water per foot of soil depth and gallons of water per cubic foot of soil.

Soil Types	Approximate Water-Holding Capacity	
	Inches per foot of soil depth	Gallons per cubic foot of soil
sandy	0.8	0.5
loam	1.6	1.0
clay	2.4	1.5

The soil depth from which a plant normally extracts water depends on the rooting depth of the plant. The depth of rooting varies with the type of plant. As a general guide, however, the main root zones of plants are as follows:

—lawn grasses and leafy vegetables; top 1 foot
—corn, tomatoes, and small shrubs; top 1 or 2 feet
—small trees and large shrubs; top 2 or 3 feet

The amount of water a plant uses in 1 day depends on the air temperature and the wind velocity. The table below is a general guide to average daily water use.

Irrigation Season[1]	Location in California	
	Hot interior valleys (inch)	Coastal valleys (inch)
summer	0.25 to 0.35	0.15 to 0.2
spring or fall	0.1 to 0.2	0.1 to 0.15

For example, during the summer a grass lawn growing on a loam soil in an interior valley would use approximately 0.3 inch of water per day. Since the top foot of a loam soil holds about 1.6 inches of water, the plants would deplete most of the available water from the main root zone in about 5 days. Thus, an irrigation would be required every 4 or 5 days.

If you have a sprinkler that applies about 0.5 inch of water per hour and no runoff occurs, a 3-hour irrigation would be required. In the spring and fall, the amount of water required per irrigation would be the same, but the number of days between irrigations would be almost twice as long. With deep-rooted trees and shrubs, you could wait two or three times as long between irrigations, but you would need to apply two to three times as much water per irrigation.

You can also use plant symptoms as a guide to irrigation. When short of water, many plants show a dark bluish-green color, or wilting, or both. The symptoms first appear during the hottest part of the day. When either of these symptoms appears, it is time to irrigate.

Another method to determine when to irrigate is to use a shovel or soil tube to check the soil-water content at the 6-inch depth. With a sandy soil, squeeze the soil in your hand; if the ball crumbles easily, it is too dry. With a clay soil, try to roll it into a thread; if this is difficult to do, it indicates that the soil is becoming depleted of water. As you gain experience with the feel of the soil and by observing plant symptoms, it will help you time your irrigations and save water.

Provide just enough water at each irrigation to replenish the water used by the plants. This means that you should fill the soil reservoir for the plants to use over a period of time. It is best to give a thorough soaking, then not irrigate again until necessary.

Do not irrigate frequently with small amounts of water. This results in excessive evaporation without deep wetting in the root zone and may

result in excessive build-up of salts. Sprinkling by hand is usually a waste of time and water because not enough water is applied. Frequent applications of water may also encourage root rots and other diseases.

You can apply water in furrows, basins, or by standard garden or lawn sprinklers. If you use sprinklers, the application rate should be low enough so that the water soaks into the soil immediately, without runoff. If runoff occurs, stop irrigating for an hour or two; then continue irrigating until enough water has been applied. A good rule to follow is to irrigate thoroughly but not frequently.

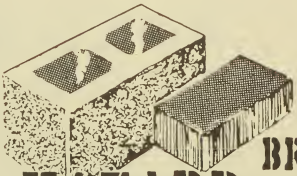
Good drainage is needed to give the plant roots adequate air in the soil and to help prevent diseases, such as root rots. It is usually difficult or unnecessary to do anything about drainage in the home garden except to plant on raised beds. Using raised beds is especially good in winter gardens because the water from excessive rainfall then drains away from the plants.

If salinity is a problem, you can leach or wash the excess salts down through the soil by irrigating with large amounts of water. If it is necessary to leach, do it before planting, or during the dormant season with perennial plants.

Cultivation does not save water, except by killing weeds that compete with crops for both water and nutrients. However, if you apply mulching material to the surface of a soil after a cultivation, it often improves the rate of water infiltration and helps conserve soil moisture by preventing surface evaporation.

Frequent stirring or cultivation does not improve the soil, since soil loosened by cultivation usually returns to its original condition after one or two irrigations. It is usually unnecessary to spade or turn the soil more than once a season, even though rains or irrigations have beaten it down.

Do not till your garden soil unless you are accomplishing some useful purpose, such as turning under organic matter, controlling weeds, making irrigation furrows, or loosening a small amount of soil for planting seed. Some gardeners maintain the beds and irrigation furrows for several years and till only a narrow strip on top of the bed to plant seeds. To avoid packing the garden soil, provide paths for walking and other traffic.



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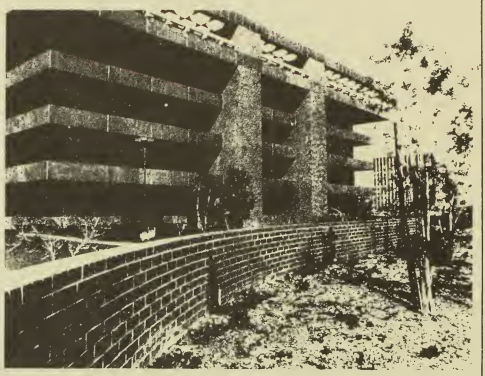

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THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT A FERN

by HELEN CHAMLEE *

LONG BEFORE dinosaurs, long, long before people, there were ferns upon the earth. We find the proof in rocks and coal, where fossil remains of ancient plants are easily recognized as ferns. During the Coal Age, ferns and related plants were predominant in the vegetation scene and all the plant world was green, for there were then no flowering plants.

Green still is the color that comes to mind when we think ferns—green, delicate and lacy—although a few species here and there are gold, purple or gray. Well, a birdsnest fern wouldn't be called lacy exactly, and perhaps a 40-foot tree fern could not be called delicate, but still it is lacy and that description pretty well covers the 10,000 species.

Certainly the word "lacy" fits the fern on the cover of this issue, the lady fern, *Athyrium filix-femina*. It is said that the name *filix-femina*, literally "female fern," was given to this plant because of the grace and delicacy of its finely divided fronds.

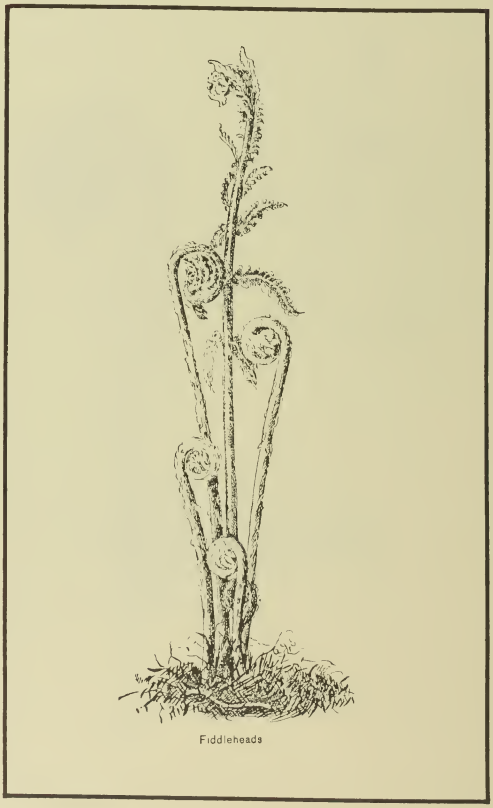
Lady fern is widely distributed throughout the British Isles and across the cooler parts of Eurasia and North America. There's a California variety, found from the San Jacinto and San Bernardino Mountains north to Siskiyou County, and other varieties in Alaska, Colorado and northeastern United States.

Lady fern is one of those plants that have never been quite sure just what they should look like; it throws sports like crazy and at one time more than 300 of these were named and catalogued. The feathery fronds sometimes are crested in fanciful ruffles, and almost never are two plants exactly alike. Some lady ferns look like fringes, others resemble parsley. They vary in height from 3-inch midgets to 4-foot giants, and from spreading to stiffly erect in habit. Part of their appeal is that there is no monotony among the lady ferns.

We cherish ferns today as elements of a garden, as potted house plants or as undisturbed bits of natural scenery. But it was not always so.

Until the early 19th Century, about 150 years ago, little interest was shown in ferns as garden subjects. They had their place in folklore, but not in gardens.

One must bear in mind that western European gardens were descended from the apothecaries' gardens—the herb gardens of medieval monasteries. Plants in those gardens were grown for their medicinal value, real or supposed. There were also fruit gardens and kitchen or "sallet" gardens, but ferns had no place in any of these, being next to useless in either cookery or the healing arts.



Fiddleheads

*Helen Witham has legally changed her name to Chamlee.

LADY-FERN
Athyrium filix-fœmia

A CROSIER

HAY-SCENTED FERN
a Early stage of fruiting pinnule

Portion of fertile frond

True, some ferns were valued for their magical properties. The lady fern was the supposed bearer of the mystic fern seed which rendered its possessor invisible, or so it was believed.

There's the tale of the man who, passing through a wood when the seed was ripe, got some in his shoes. Thereupon he became invisible. He went on home and startled his family no end. They could hear him walking about and speaking to them but of course they could not see him. Finally one of them thought of fern seed, called to him to take off his shoes, and there he was in plain sight!

In Swabia, the belief was that fern seed brought by the devil near midnight would enable one man to do the work of thirty. Certainly some kind of action would follow such a special delivery.

In Russia the fern seed was supposed to convey second sight. A farmer went out to search for his cattle, got some seed in his shoes and immediately knew not only the whereabouts of the cattle but of a buried treasure besides. Alas, he went home for a shovel, changed his shoes—and lost his magic.

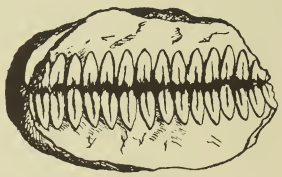
Ferns were big time way back in the Coal Age but not again until about 150 years ago, when the "Great Victorian Fern Craze" seized the center stage of horticulture. The 19th Century saw the rise and fall of a major fashion, similar to the tulipomania of the 16th Century.

While there is no sure accounting for the sudden madnesses that seize a whole population, in this case several contributing factors are recognized. A reliable method of propagating ferns from spores had lately been worked out, arousing some interest in the culture of ferns. Then, too, a few years earlier (1795) Captain Bligh, of Bounty fame, had brought from the West Indies the first batch of tropical ferns, 37 species in all. This had stirred up interest in collecting, but it was not until the development of the Wardian case that ferns became the one kind of plant no one wanted to be without.

Nathaniel Ward, London physician and naturalist, was not the actual discoverer of the principle of the terrarium but his observation of a horticultural accident and the subsequent publication of an article in the enormously popular Gardner's Magazine stimulated public interest. Ward first thought of trying to grow plants in bottles or glass cases when he noticed tiny plants growing in a glass bottle in which he had shut up a hawkmoth chrysalis the previous summer. These first bottle babies were annual blue grass, ***Poa annua*** and the male fern, ***Dryopteris filixmas***. They thrived in his bottle for 19 years. *(Author's note: My authority did not state whether the blue grass reproduced throughout that period; the fern poses no puzzle—ferns are known to live for decades, even centuries.)*

Ferns in bottles, glass cases and under bell jars became a veritable rage and they appeared as decorative motifs on china, glass, wallpaper and other household objects. Pressed ferns made into pictures were framed and hung on many a wall. Collectors scoured fields and forests for living specimens to supply the greedy market. Like all such fashions, this one cooled down in time, but not before it served to establish ferns as satisfactory garden and house plants.

Today we see a revival of interest in ferns both as indoor and outdoor plants, but on a more modest scale. Fern societies and fern amateurs in the true sense of that word—lovers of ferns, continue to proliferate. It is to be hoped that today's interest will be more lasting than that nineteenth century fern mania. □



A COAL BALL

INTRODUCTION TO GERANIUMS

by MARILYN STEBER

The author is a member of the S. D. Geranium Society.

ONE THING is certain: say "geranium" when the conversation turns to gardening, and you can count on a definite reaction that is seldom neutral. People either wax ecstatic or they grunt and dismiss geraniums as weeds. The plant is used so commonly in Southern California that one may tend to think of it as a native weed. In fact many are so easily grown here that basic care is often overlooked, leading to an unsightly scraggly and "weed-like" plant. That's when the grunters hack their geraniums down and haul them to the dump.

Geraniums do not thrive on neglect. They thrive in spite of neglect. You have to admire a plant that blooms whether or not it is lovingly tended. As with all growing things, geraniums do need some attention to look their best and fulfill their role in the garden.

There's really no big secret for decent success with geraniums. Until you get involved with exhibiting you can follow the basic rules for care of any other perennial: feed it, water it, prune it, and put it in the right place. Control pests with appropriate insecticides or your favorite tried-and-true home remedy.

Feed with a general purpose plant food most of the time. In March start feeding a bloom booster for the floral display you'll be treated to about six weeks later. Soil texture dictates water needs and you know best how long yours retains moisture. Most geraniums won't remind you to water them by wilting a bit and reviving after a soaking. They'll simply shed their leaves and make you feel guilty every time you see them for weeks after. Prune as indicated by type October/November. Placing a geranium in the garden may take some experimenting depending upon your expectations.

Martha Washingtons—the ones labelled ***Pelargonium domesticum*** "something-or-other"—do well in partial shade or full sun. Generally the blossom color is more intense where the sunlight is filtered. Keep in mind these are used for an annual display

Cramped for space? Try a totem pole of this variety! And that's its name: "Totem Pole of Santa Paula." (Perfect for trailer gardeners.)

Some geraniums are loved as much for their foliage as for their flowers. In fact, some are typified as 'fancy leaf.' This one is "Happy Thought" —and so it is!

Now a favorite: "Party Dress" (Irene) with soft delicate rose pink coloration. Always in bloom.

Below: "Confetti," a pelargonium. Lavishly flowered, this is lavender rose with dark veining on all the petals.

of about three months and the rest of the year they are just nice little shrubs except after you prune back at least a third in the fall. (By the way, Martha Washingtons are called 'Regals' by those "in the know"!)

Common bedding geraniums—which may or may not be labelled *Pelargonium hortorum* "something"—love a sunny location. They don't have a truly dormant period and you can either prune back for shape or cuttings all year round, or take out offensive stalks in the fall. If you start a cutting of one of these you'll very likely find that it will zoom up head high without a branch unless you prune at about six inches tall or pinch out the terminal growth when you've rooted the cutting. If the whole thing gets out of hand and you do have a tree, don't despair. Bring out your tree tie or twist'ems and a stake and treat it as a small tree. Then be sure to pinch out the terminal growth with your fingernails to form a head and do that every month or so until your tree has a nice shape. Don't let leaves form on the trunk. You may be the first on your block to have such a creation.

Ivy geraniums usually are labelled only as to color—*Pelargonium peltatum* "color"—and are recommended for ground cover and hanging baskets. You have the choice of low growers or more upright types. Hanging baskets should be pruned back in the fall and fed and watered religiously because of their special condition and function. Used for gound cover one wouldn't cut back much, but pruning encourages more side growth, thus more cover. Ivies can be "slipped" all year 'round and have fairly constant blooms as evidenced by Southern California freeway plantings.

Scented geraniums have several species names—*Pelargonium crispem* 'peach', *P. graveolens* 'rose', *P. tomentosum* 'peppermint'—and they are classified as herbs by nurserymen so you'll find them on the herb table along with oregano and thyme. They may simply be labelled as to the fragrance they impart when their leaves are gently rubbed. Some of these sprawl (peppermint, particularly) while others grow upright. If you like to make sachets, herb baths, bake or just sniff, there's a scented geranium for you. Allow plenty of room for them in the garden. Prune them in the fall and dry the leaves or share the cuttings with your friends.

For more exotic geraniums visit geranium shows or specialty nurseries. Be sure to take along one of those pessimistic friends and then count the number of times they say "That's a geranium?! I had no idea they could be so beautiful." □

STARTING VEGETABLE SEEDS INDOORS

WHY START seeds indoors? Two good reasons: You'll get more plants because seeds won't be lost to birds and insects or washed away by possible heavy rains, or prevented from germinating by weeds; and the growing season will be longer.

Harwood Hall, farm advisor, Cooperative Extension, University of California, has written two leaflets: Starting Seeds Indoors (No. 2771) and What, When, Where, and How Much to Plant (No. 2731). Copies may be ordered by writing: Planting Seeds, Box 1629-N, Richmond, Ca. 94802.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hall sums up the requirements for raising successful transplants. He says, "All you need is a disease-free growing medium, proper warmth and moisture for seed germination, adequate light for vigorous growth, and gradual adjustment of the plants from indoor to outdoor conditions."

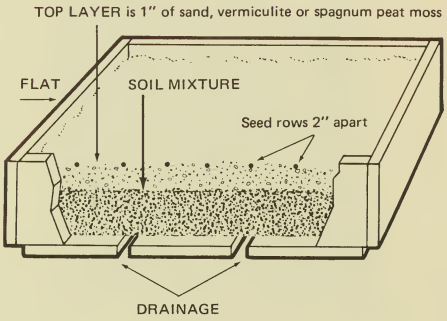
Here's how to get started:

WHEN AND WHERE—Start most vegetable transplants in a warm room with at least 6 hours of direct sun, about 6 to 8 weeks before the recommended planting time. Germinating seeds need temperatures of between 60 and 75 degrees; seedlings between 50 and 65 degrees.

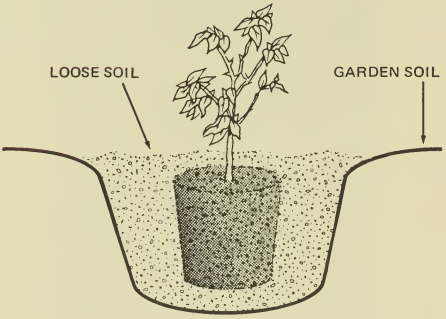
SOIL—Purchase a soil mixture at a garden supply center or mix one with equal parts of garden soil, sphagnum peat moss and sand. Sterilize the soil in the oven before mixing. This will create an offensive odor, but will kill disease-causing organisms that may attack seedlings. (Commercial planting mixtures are generally sterile.)

To sterilize soil, preheat oven to about 200 degrees. Fill a container with moist, but not wet, soil. Put a thermometer in the soil as you would in a beef roast. Bake soil till temperature reaches 180 degrees on the thermometer. Continue baking about 30 minutes. Cool slightly and mix sterilized soil with sphagnum peat moss and sand. Sift out lumps, rocks or other debris.

CONTAINERS—Any clay, plastic or metal containers; wooden boxes or nursery flats may be used for planting seeds indoors, but should have holes



STARTING SEEDS IN FLATS



TRANSPLANTING IN SOIL

for drainage. Clean them with a solution of one part chlorine bleach to ten parts water, then sterilize in the oven at the same time as the soil. Commercially available fiber seed flats and peat pots are sterile and are recommended to prevent rotting.

PLANTING—Fill planting container with soil mixture to 1 inch from the top and press to make a firm seedbed. Water thoroughly, then add ½ inch of vermiculite, sand or sphagnum peat moss. Sow seeds ½ inch apart in rows 2 inches apart. (See figure 1.)

If peat pots are used, plant two seeds per pot, and one seed per cup if using styrofoam, paper or plastic cups. Sprinkle planting mixture over seeds to about ¼ inch. Water gently using a spray bottle. Label container with plant name and planting date and cover with plastic film or a plastic bag. Keep at 60 to 75 degrees—not in direct sunlight. .Water only enough to keep soil moist.

When seeds have sprouted, remove cover and place container near sunny window or under 40-watt fluorescent tubes 6 to 8 inches above seedlings with room temperature 50 to 65 degrees.

Provide the new seedlings with water and fertilizer. Use a solution of 1 tablespoon soluble fertilizer in 1 gallon water. Water thoroughly but gently so as not to wash them out of the soil.

After two sets of leaves have developed, transfer seedling to an individual peat pot or set in groups in larger flats, using more of the sterile soil mixture. To transfer, carefully dig up small plants with large knife, putty knife or spatula. Let the group of seedlings fall apart and pick out individual plants. Poke holes 2½ inches apart in soil mixture of new container and set plants in, taking care not to pinch the tender seedlings.

Press soil down to make firm, and water gently. For seeds sown in individual pots, thin to one plant per pot. Shade plants for a few days or place under a 40-watt fluorescent light where there is little or not heat buildup. Continue fertilizing and watering until the plants reach transplant size.

HARDENING, TRANSPLANTING—About 10 days before the transplanting date, gradually withhold water—but don't let the plants wilt. Gradually expose them to outside temperatures and direct sun by setting flats or containers outside during the day. Avoid fertilizing during this period.

Prepare the garden soil by adding 1 to 2 pounds of 5—10—5 fertilizer per 100 square feet of garden area, scattering it on the surface. Then turn the soil 6 to 8 inches deep by spading, rototilling or plowing.

Immediately before transplanting, water the plants well. As close as possible to the recommended date, transplant seedlings to the ground. Plants grown in fiber, plastic or clay pots should be removed from their containers before planting. Plants grown in peat pots can be transplanted intact, but remove the container bottoms to improve drainage. However, in extremely sandy soil, the entire peat pot should be removed or it may act like a wick, evaporating moisture and causing seedlings to wilt or die.

To transplant, dig a hole about twice the size of the individual plant soil ball. Set plant only slightly deeper than it was in the pot. Place soil loosely around the roots, filling the hole to ground level. (See figure 2.) Add 1 cup of starter solution (1 tablespoon of a fertilizer 5—10—5 or 4—10—4, to 1 gallon water). After solution has soaked in, sprinkle some dry soil around the plant.

Protect young transplants for the first few days. If the two or three days following transplanting are sunny and hot, cover plants with newspaper "tents" to prevent wilting. Water as necessary. If the weather is cold, cover transplants with hotcaps. If weather is windy, cover plants with either newspaper "tents" or hotcaps, depending on temperatures. □

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VICTORIAN REVIVAL

by VERA TERRELL

IN FLOWER arranging today, we see the revival of much Victorian "fru-fru" discarded in the past and often referred to as vulgar and ornate. The Victorian arrangement had its beginning in France and reached its peak during the Victorian era in England where large gardens of flowers were grown to be enjoyed as cut flowers in the homes of rich and poor alike. Naturally the arrangement followed the popularity of the day.

Containers are usually pedestal or compote in shape. Open bowls can be used but do not lend themselves as nicely as the elevated ones. Glass, silver, alabaster, bronze, pewter or fine ceramics are my choice.

The contempory Victorian arrangement assumes many forms other than the remembered tight pyramid. It involves more studied color harmonies with the not too strict monochromatic being favored with careful grouping and assembling of varieties, sizes and contrasts of both flowers and foliage being good practice. Choose your container first, then decide on your design. This is basic. Without a design, it is difficult to achieve satisfacotry results. Your container will influence your selection of plant material, so all must harmonize.

I establish my design with foliage or the larger flowers working with a triangle within a triangle and then filling in without too much density. When using foliage as first placement, I insert the larger pieces and prune as I progress. To achieve the fru-fru, I use fine material such as fern, coral bells, gypsophilia, vines, and grasses, allowing some to droop down over the edge in an uneven pattern. Keep it simple. This part is easy to overdo. When in doubt, leave it out.

Since quantities of flowers and foliage are used, proper hardening is very important. This menas over night or at least several hours in deep water—I use warm water at first and let it cool, making sure my container has water in it when I start. A good bit of advice is "work wet." Grooming is done before hardening. Remove damaged petals and excess foliage, excess buds, thorns from roses and descendent blossoms. Make sure all flower stems are free of foliage and side branches—extras can be added later as needed. Save your prunings, such as rose foliage, so it can be placed separately into its best advantage and not left on the stem to create a clutter that is hard to overcome and remove. For tools, you will need good sharp shears in two sizes, fine wire and of course, your controls which may be crumpled wire cloth, boston fern tied in a ball with string, kenzan, oasis, or whatever else works best for you. I prefer oasis and sometimes fasten it to a larger kenzan or tape it with florists' tape (not corsage tape) to the

The author is a member of the Flower Arrangers' Guild

edge of the container being careful to leave the center portion free.

Use fine wire to support weak stems or for bending stems, also to fasten small flowers such as sweet peas in groups as an accent where needed. When using oasis, it is wise to be very sure of your placement of the larger stemmed materials, since such removal leaves a hole in the oasis that cannot be remedied. If you wanted to change, it is better to snip off the offender as short as possible and work around it. For a third dimension place blue flowers toward the center and flowers of the same variety cut in different lengths.

Flower arranging should be regarded as an artform, but not one without pleasure in creating. Make it a joy before, during, and after. A Victorian arrangement can last several days if you snip out the spent materials and replace only where a vacant spot exists. This can be successfully done with just foliage.

Victorian can be beautiful and certainly not difficult. If it is easier to place the larger and darker flowers at the bottom and gradually increase the size to the top, then do it, and as you progress other ideas will come. Keep your flowers varied to avoid the monotony of the layered look.□

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CARING FOR YOUR FUCHSIAS

by MORRISON W. DOTY

AS SPRING approaches, we find fuchsia growers, (especially the new ones), may be concerned most with pruning, propagation, and causes of previous plant losses.

Pruning is essential, not only to stimulate the new growth necessary for abundant bloom, but to keep the proper shape of each fuchsia type from growing out of bounds. Straggly and ugly long growth should all be cut most drastically, if it was done in autumn, as many prefer.

Don't be afraid to cut away two-thirds of all new growth generally, and even the old wood also, as necessary to shape the plant to its proper type as a bush, background or low border, basket, tree or espalier.

Weak and cross growth is to be cut out entirely, baskets trimmed back about to the edge, and the strong container plants, cut back to the last three or four nodes, leaving a little foliage, if possible, against adverse conditions. Tree types should be staked, after trimming and heading at the proper height, and the trunk leaf nodes rubbed off to prevent bushing.

Espaliers will need more restrained and careful pruning, keeping them within the bounds and pattern decided upon, retied and pinched.

Pinching back the growth tips may be about as important as pruning in shaping the plant, and even more so in holding back uneven ugly growth, or too early bloom, before the plants have grown sturdy enough. Stop pinching about three weeks before you want blooming to start.

All spring pruning should be done after danger of frost-kill is past; that is mid or late February in Southern California usually, depending upon location. Night cold varies greatly, even in the city of San Diego, where we have seen ice in deep canyons on both sides; yet our knoll between, has had no bad freeze-kill in 25 years.

In cases of frost-kill in cold areas, don't prune, feed, or even water at first, then only a little, until they show signs of life, to accept, slowly. Moving to warmer (not in direct sun) area often helps container plants recover.

—*Photos by Betty Mackintosh*

Gay Darr, a flirty blue double with dark pink, hybridized by Soo Yun Fields

The wealth of cuttings at pruning time will tempt the most casual gardener to propagate more of his favorite varieties, especially since it is so easy that fuchsias will root well just in water.

With sharp shears, cut tips from the new growth of selected vigorous plants not over three or four inches long, dip in rooting hormone (optional), then press cuttings down firmly, minus lower leaves, into moist, sharp sand, with a bit of wet peat or leaf mold added, in case you forgot to transplant at the right time. Placed in a warm protected nook with filtered sunlight, they should be ready to put into two-inch pots in three weeks or less, without any bottom heat.

Starting the slips in tiny greenhouse plastic cups instead of large sand flats makes them easier to transplant without injury to the roots, and you may start pinching them into rounded shape for sturdy, even growth quite early. Some commercial potting mixes are sufficient alone, but many

fuchsia growers who have had puzzling plant losses last year while using complex mixes with elements they didn't understand, are returning to the old simple standby of fine old leaf mold, manure, and sandy humus soil in equal parts.

Belle of Salem is a serene and lovely single pink, bell-shaped, with dark pink veining and Carmine sepals.

Feed fish emulsion 10—5—5 for growth early; then 4—10—8 for bloom, every 10 or 15 days. Most growers questioned about plant losses admit possible erratic or inexperienced care of others, or neglect from vacations, illness, and other unpreventable factors. Fuchsias, once allowed to get too dry (especially in peat moss, and some other elements) may die quickly, as if by heart failure, for peat is that way. Some growers we know lost plants from keeping them too wet, due largely to an excess of moisture-holding elements in the soil mixes, plus shade and cool days. These were baskets or container plants usually, and should have been finger-tested for moisture under the surface about every day in hot weather, but allowed to get surface-dry between waterings. The cold damp or foggy nights fool the new gardener about moisture until plants are dangerously dry, and windy weather is a worse problem.

So remember to check all container plants regularly regardless of weather, for proper moisture, soil, drainage, pests, sunlight, etc. (that affect them so much more than plants in the ground) and thus avoid so many specimen plant losses.

For the pests, and the rather rare root fungus rot, or wilt, the nurseries specializing in fuchsias will be very helpful with remedies and advice. When you're browsing for new varieties, ask the nurseryman for advice. Exchange cuttings with garden friends, and join a fuchsia or garden society to enjoy your hobby more fully. □

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BEGONIAS

MARGARET LEE

- ✓ to watch tuberous begonias for signs of mildew, correct with dust or spray.
- ✓ to check cane type begonias and cut back if needed.
- ✓ to spray for insects; using malathion base spray.
- ✓ to finish repotting where needed; use a light porous mixture.
- ✓ to feed plants with well-balanced all-purpose fertilizer.
- ✓ to water as needed—just keep moist not wet.
- ✓ to check the tuberous type for drainage, repot to a larger container if needed, adding fresh soil. Stake any tall stems.

BROMELIADS

THELMA O'REILLY

- ✓ to groom your plants and trim away any frost damage.
- ✓ to remove offsets for extra plants.
- ✓ to maintain a pest control program; watch for snails and slugs.
- ✓ to feed with half-strength fertilizer.
- ✓ to keep "cups" clean and filled with clean water.
- ✓ to keep humidity around walkways and plant areas.

CACTUS & SUCCULENTS

VERNA PASEK

- ✓ to get out and water plants early.
- ✓ to watch for mealybugs and aphids.
- ✓ to check for scale—spray with soapy water or use malathion.
- ✓ to feed with 10—10—10 fertilizer to promote flowering.
- ✓ to take cuttings of your Christmas Cactus and other succulents.
- ✓ to rest cuttings for a day before putting into damp sand.

CAMELLIAS

CAPT. BENJAMIN BERRY

- ✓ to begin a regular program of fertilizing using only acid type, cotton seed meal, fish oil, or a commercial type fertilizer especially for camellias. Remember it is better to use a little less than the recommended amount than to use too much.
- ✓ to water well the day before applying any fertilizer.
- ✓ to replace mulch where needed using bark or pine needles.
- ✓ to watch for aphids on the new and tender growth, and spray where necessary.
- ✓ to spray or dust with chlorodane to discourage leaf beetles or aphids.
- ✓ to prune out all dead and unproductive branches as well as overlapping branches.
- ✓ to feed iron if needed or give a handful of epsom salts.

DAHLIAS

ABE JANZEN

- ✓ to plant smaller varieties, and give regular care to growing plants.
- ✓ to draw soil around plants as they progress in growth.
- ✓ to feed with low nitrogen fertilizer (4—10—10) dry or liquid.
- ✓ to spray weekly to control insects, guard against leaf miners, thrips and aphids.
- ✓ to pinch out center when two or three sets of leaves form.
- ✓ to water when top of soil is dry; when buds start forming be sure to soak deeply and more often.

EPIPHYLLUMS

MARY & WARREN KELLY

- ✓ to remove wilted blooms by cutting about ¾ inch from stem—unless you desire seed.
- ✓ to prune plants to shape by taking cuttings after flowering.
- ✓ to take care in watering—plants should never be allowed to dry out, but should not be soggy either.
- ✓ to renew snail bait and watch for pests.
- ✓ to feed plants after blooming with a balanced

fertilizer (7–7–7).
✓ to stake any long spindly growth.

FERNS

RAY SODOMKA

✓ to spray for aphids and scale.
✓ to remove dead fronds.
✓ to fertilize with high nitrogen, liquid or pellets twice a month.
✓ to maintain thorough watering, including surrounding areas to keep humidity.
✓ to plant spore.

FUCHSIAS

WILLIAM SELBY

✓ to pinch plants for bushy growth; pinch, shape. Stop at least 6 weeks before desired bloom.
✓ to water and fertilize, using a low nitrogen formula to force bud and blooms. Best to ust a weaker solution and more often.
✓ to watch for whitefly and inch worms.
✓ to watch watering as warm weather begins—do not overwater, but keep moist. Mist early on warm days; not water.

GERANIUMS

PHIL BUSH

✓ to feed regularly with a low nitrogen type fertilizer, for bloom.
✓ to start pinching out old flowers, and shaping plants that have bloomed.
✓ to pinch out tops of plants to make them bush.
✓ to spray with malathion to control pests.
✓ to drench with a systemic insecticide to discourage sucking insects.
✓ to make cuttings of plants that have bloomed. Root in sandy soil or plain sand but repot into soil after rooting.
✓ to watch for worms that bore holes into buds.
✓ to turn potted plants periodically to make a well-shaped plant.

IRIS

✓ to keep watering while still blooming.
✓ to keep Siberian iris damp and to feed for additional growth; use camellia food.
✓ to feed Japanese iris with camellia food in the water in which they are grown. Give plenty of water if not grown in pools.
✓ to feed Spurias with low nitrogen fertilizer.
✓ to watch for aphids; can use systemic insecticide.
✓ to prepare beds for planting and transplanting tall-bearded after bloom. Work humus into soil plus some fertilizer before replanting.
✓ to allow cut surfaces of rhizomes to dry and be exposed to sunlight several hours before replanting. May give a light dusting of soil sulphur on the wounds.

ORCHIDS

LOIS DONAHUE

✓ to begin high nitrogen feeding of cymbidiums.
✓ to continue dividing cymbidiums that need it.
✓ to continue light feeding of cattleyas.
✓ to use a non-oily spray for pests when needed. Use special snail granules for snails and slugs.
✓ to repot cypripediums after blooming.
✓ to make sure you use fresh potting mixes for all repotting.
✓ to make sure of good air circulation and humidity for all orchids.
✓ to keep plants well-watered at all times during warm summer months but not overwatered.
✓ to move *Dendrobium phalaenopsis* to a larger pot after it has stop blooming, if it has outgrown its quarters. Pot in fresh fir bark when new growth is starting.

ROSES

DEE THORSON

✓ to fertilize bi-weekly, alternating between dry and liquid rose food.
✓ to continue mildew prevention. If mildew does appear, spray with Parnon every three days (using ½ teaspoon Parnon per gallon water) until control is obtained.
✓ to be alert for rust spores (found on the under sides of leaves closest to the ground) especially a week after a rainfall. Spray soil and lower half of bush with Acti-Dionne PM.
✓ to check for rose slugs and/or worms. Spray with Malathion or Sevin if pests are present. Damage apparent—skeletonized foliage and/or munched upon buds.
✓ to begin hybridizing.
✓ to take soft-wood cuttings.

GREEN THUMB ITEMS

✓ to feed azaleas and cut out dead wood.
✓ to remove dried bulb foliage or tie back such foliage to dry naturally before removing.
✓ to plant some gladiolus for fall bloom.
✓ to plant some summer annuals.
✓ to invest in some showy perennials available in bloom in June—agapanthus, daylillies, Shasta daisies.

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—Photo by Betty Mackintosh

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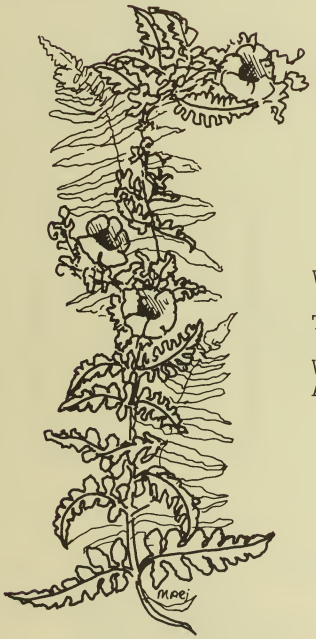
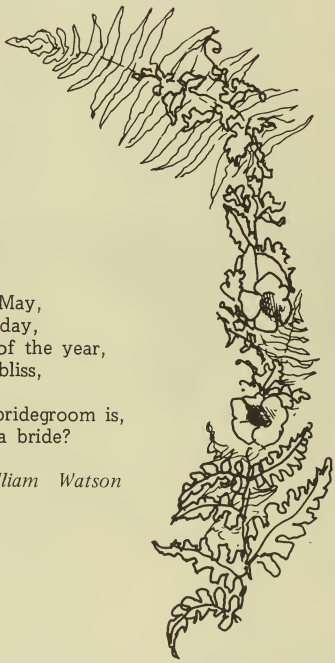


ODE IN MAY

What is so sweet and dear
  As a prosperous morn in May,
The confident prime of the day,
  And the dauntless youth of the year,
When nothing that asks for bliss,
Asking aright, is denied,
  And half of the world a bridegroom is,
  And half of the world is a bride?

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